



DORANN WEBER

The Sugar Sand Ramblers were among the headliners at the 23rd annual blueberry festival.

Rain fell, but thousands flocked to 23rd festival

By **DORANN WEBER**
Correspondent

Overcast skies and a light morning drizzle didn't deter visitors from attending the 23rd annual Blueberry Festival at Whitesbog Preservation last Saturday.

Music, walking tours, wagon tours, good food, various displays and blueberries were just a few of the event's many highlights. And despite the morning rain, the weather cleared for everyone to have a great time. Visitors enjoyed fresh-baked blueberry goods, blueberry sundaes and fresh blueberries that could be bought or picked.

Whitesbog Village was the home of Elizabeth White, the oldest daughter of J.J. White, a cranberry farmer. In 1916, Elizabeth White commercially cultivated the area's first blueberry with the help of Dr. Frederick V. Coville, a United States Department of Agriculture botanist. The blueberry has since caught on and in January 2004, it was named the official state fruit of New Jersey.

On hand at the festival this year for the first time were characters playing the roles of Elizabeth White and Dr.

out a little history.

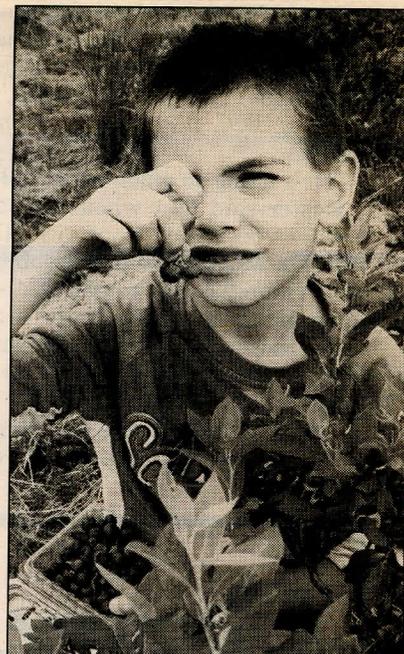
Jeffrey J. Macechak, education director of the Burlington County Historical Society, played the role of Coville. "We're playing the characters in the year 1927. We are back in time. The biggest news event that happened recently is that Lucky Lindey went to Paris," said Macechak.

Stephanie Schrader, Board of Trustee member and Whitesbog volunteer, portrayed Elizabeth White.

"I am the blueberry queen, and this year we suffered a bit of frost", said Schrader, role playing as White. "I am having a marvelous time. I just love this, I love the interaction. We've been having a ball," Macechak said.

Festival activities included hand-made crafts, demonstrations, walking tours throughout the bogs and wagon rides. Attendees could take historical tours and ride out to the blueberry fields to pick their own. Pineland folk and bluegrass music, as well as the aroma of a variety of foods, filled the air. The first annual blueberry eating contest was won by Richard Brown, 9, from East Hampton and Pemberton.

Ted Gordon, a botanist and historian, also serves on the Board of Trustees



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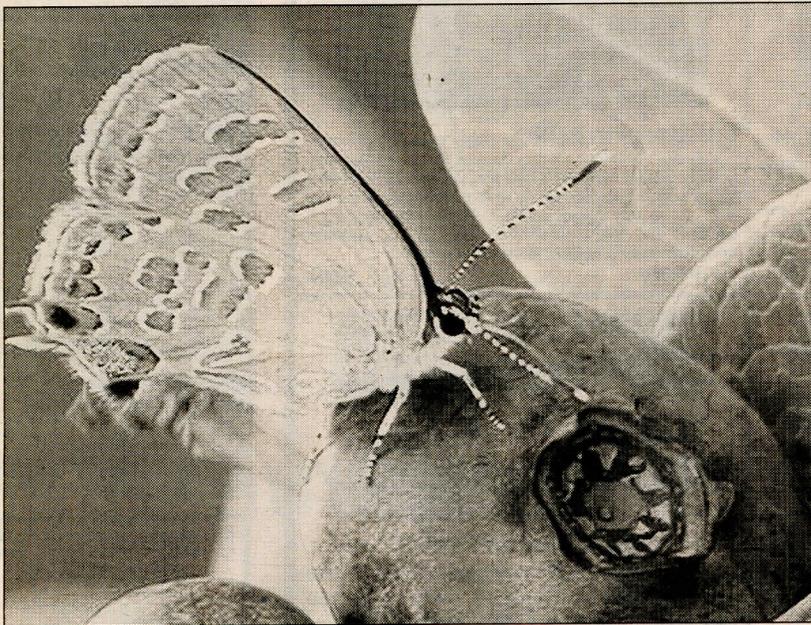
"The history of Whitesbog...goes back to the iron industry. This property was once owned by the Jones family, who were caretakers of Hanover Furnace. These blueberry fields and cranberry bogs were actually mining fields for bog ore. Cranberries have been cultivated here since the late 1860's. Blueberries weren't cultivated until the early 1900's," said Gordon.

Theresa Jacks, Executive Director of Whitesbog, was pleased with the turnout this year and thanked the many volunteers that helped put the event together.

"I'm really proud of our volunteer's. Our volunteer's are just amazing. I just hope that our volunteers know how grateful the trust and the board are," said Jacks, who was at Whitesbog the day before the festival setting up.

Jacks was concerned about the morning rain and worried if it would continue throughout the festival.

"We had no idea what to expect. We are pleasantly surprised, pleased and happy that everyone came out and shared Whitesbog with us," said Jacks.



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There were plenty of attractions at last weekend's blueberry festival, but the real stars were the blueberries themselves.

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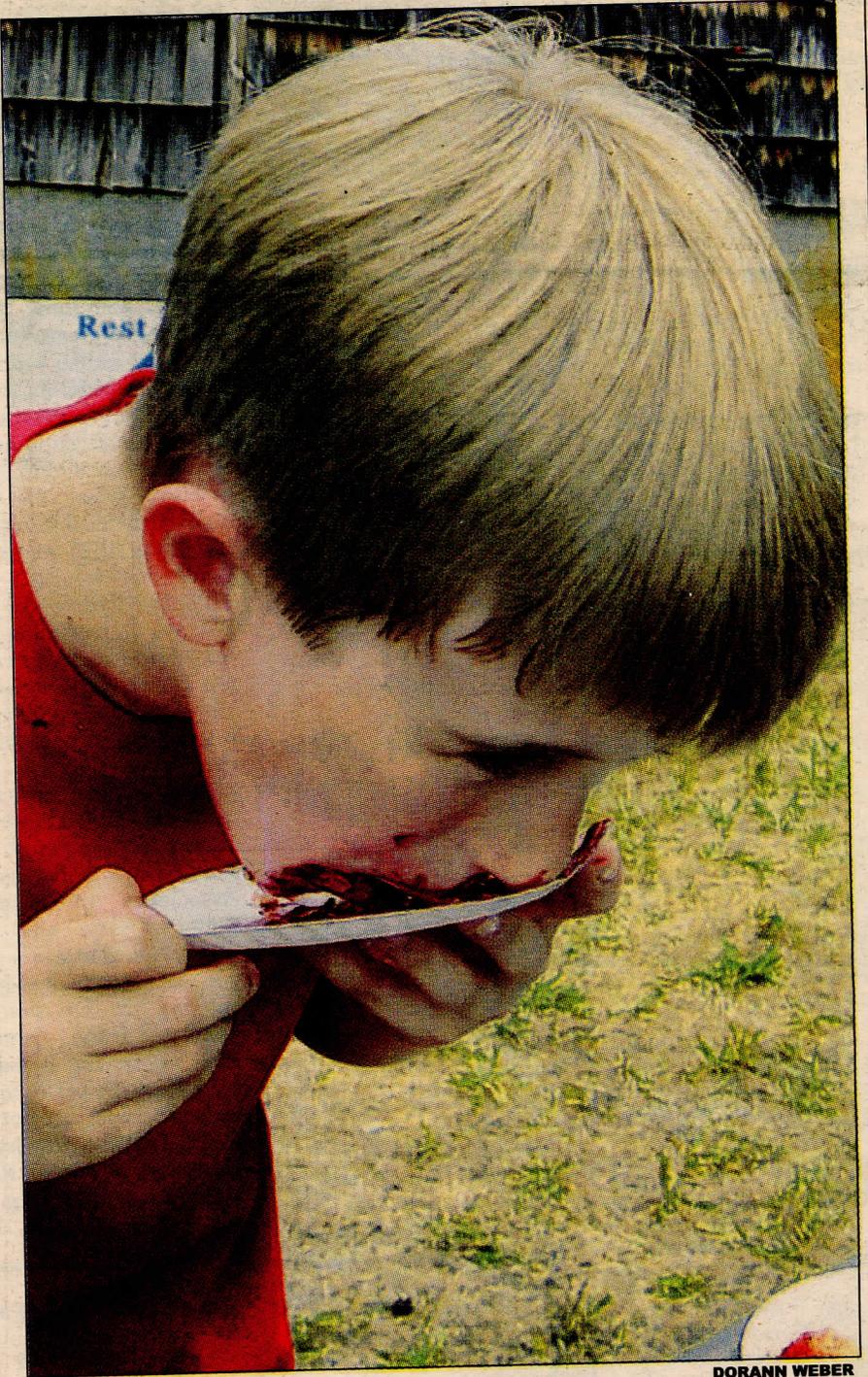
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Face full of blueberry fun



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Richard Brown, 9, finishes the last of his blueberry pie and is announced winner of the pie eating contest.